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Security Council

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Monday, 4 December 2006, 11.35 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Al-Nasser	(Qatar)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Russian Federation	Mr. Rogachev
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

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06-63968 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Canada, Colombia, Finland, Israel, Lebanon, Myanmar and Norway, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland. Before giving him the floor, I wish to note that this is Mr. Egeland's last appearance in the Security Council in his capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. On behalf of the members, I wish to extend our thanks and gratitude to Mr. Egeland for his dedicated efforts in addressing humanitarian concerns, as well as in bringing humanitarian issues to the attention of the international community. We understand that upon his departure, he will not immediately take up any challenging tasks, but will take some well deserved rest instead. We hope he will be able to implement that plan. In bidding him farewell, we wish him success and fulfilment in his future endeavours.

I now give the floor to Mr. Egeland.

Mr. Egeland: It is very good to be back one last time in this capacity. Over the past three years, I have been encouraged to see that concern for the protection of civilians has steadily gained prominence in the Security Council's deliberations and has been reflected in United Nations humanitarian and peace operations. When fighting takes place predominantly amidst the civilian population, or is waged directly against them, and when the main consequential losses are sustained by civilians, then it is imperative that the safety, security and well-being of civilians be at the heart of our approach to international security and crisis management. The real measure of our United Nations success will be judged by the extent to which our actions have made a difference in securing the protection, the rights and the freedoms of the civilian population.

Last year, as Members of the United Nations, Council members solemnly pledged to accept the responsibility to protect civilian populations. We are, sadly, still far away from seeing that responsibility translate into predictable and adequate action to provide protection for all beleaguered and threatened communities irrespective of time, place and circumstance. That responsibility to protect must be depoliticized, become a truly shared interest and translate into joint action by all members of the Council and by our global Organization. Thereby, members will live up to the expectations of tens of millions of vulnerable men, women and children for a United Nations that is united.

I have seen during my tenure as Emergency Relief Coordinator that we have succeeded in providing security when in the end there was united action taken by all members. We are seeing vast progress in Liberia, in Sierra Leone, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in South Sudan thanks to that. We have not had the same unity of purpose or action in Darfur or in Gaza. Our readiness to act, to

sanction and to fund must be the same in Uganda, in Chad or Côte d'Ivoire as it is in Afghanistan, Kosovo or Iraq. Our responsibility to protect must transcend singular interests and become a core principle of humanity across all civilizations. That is why this regular thematic debate on the protection of civilians matters so much. When the lives and safety of civilians are at stake, regardless of where, neither strategic nor economic or other political interests should deter members from acting swiftly upon their united responsibility to protect.

Since my briefing to the Council in December 2003 (see S/PV.4877) — my first such briefing — we have witnessed a steady decline in the number of conflicts. Recent analysis indicates that the number of conflicts has indeed declined by 40 per cent since 1989, yet we have been far less successful in affecting the conduct of hostilities and in altering the impact of conflict. Parties to conflict have increasingly demonstrated a wilful disregard for the basic tenets of international humanitarian law. In fact, civilians have become the primary object of violence more frequently than in the past. Evidence indicates that violent attacks against non-combatants increased by 55 per cent between 1989 and 2005, with the most significant increase occurring in the last five years.

The reasons for that are many. The proliferation of non-State and informal armed groups and their supply of ever more sophisticated weaponry and equipment is one reason. Another one is the intentional, reckless and often disproportionate use of military weaponry and tactics with little or no regard for their impact on the civilian population.

For example, the Iraqi population wakes up every morning to a staggering number of civilians who have been executed, maimed and tortured by sectarian militias cleansing entire neighbourhoods and areas of men, women and children belonging to the "wrong" religious or ethnic group. More than 100 civilians a day, an estimated 30,000 since May 2006 alone, have been killed. Nowhere in the world do more civilians die right now from violence directed against them than in Iraq.

In Gaza, since September, Israel has launched some 15,000 artillery shells, mostly into densely populated areas, killing civilians and children and destroying essential infrastructure. Palestinian militants have launched some 1,700 devices into Israel with no attempt to distinguish between combatants and Israeli civilians. Suicide bombings aimed at causing maximum casualties and terror among civilians have become a regular feature of violence in too many conflicts.

And then there is the use of indiscriminate weapons. In August, I voiced my outrage at the unacceptably large number of cluster bomb strikes in southern Lebanon. The use of cluster munitions, by anyone, anywhere in the world, is, in my view, immoral. Just like landmines, they continue to kill and maim even after the conflict has ended. The victims are children at play or adults trying to rebuild their communities out of the rubble. In southern Lebanon alone, we have more than a million unexploded bomblets that lie hidden in fields, olive groves, and gardens, causing one of the biggest impediments to a speedy return of the displaced and to the rapid reconstruction of homes and livelihoods. Pending their eventual prohibition, I urge Council members to support a moratorium on the use of cluster munitions, a weapon which belongs in the garbage cans of history along with landmines.

In reviewing my seven briefings on the protection of civilians to the Council, you will find that the key concerns are still the same as those listed in my original ten-point action plan. They have been the recurrent themes of all my country-specific briefings to the Security Council over the past three and a half years.

The first pillar of my 2003 commitments was to work with the Council to improve humanitarian access to those most in need of protection and assistance. At that time, we at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that access was constrained or obstructed for more than 10 million people in some 20 conflict-affected countries. There have since been definite improvements, most notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, northern Uganda and southern Sudan. We have seen that concerted efforts by States, peacekeepers and humanitarian organizations can deliver positive change and sustained access.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the country with the largest war-affected population, humanitarian organizations and peacekeepers have established a common access and protection strategy based on their distinct and

complementary roles. Access and protection have improved, as peacekeepers prioritize those locations where security has most constrained humanitarian operations. However, such actions have clear resource implications for peacekeeping operations and require the Security Council to consider force composition as well as resource requirements, if peacekeeping missions are to fulfil this important element of their mandate.

Despite such improvements, however, serious obstacles to access persist in many countries. Arbitrary arrest and detention, verbal and physical abuse, and bureaucratic impediments continue to be used by authorities around the world to restrict our access to populations in need.

The most brutal means of denying access is the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers. The murder of 17 Action Contre La Faim (ACF) workers in Sri Lanka on 5 August was a vicious reminder of this fact. The targeted abduction and murder of aid workers in Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq have effectively cut off many of the neediest civilians from our assistance.

Individual incidents such as these are shocking, and the overall trends are even more alarming. In 1997, 39 humanitarian workers were killed. By 2005, this number had risen to an annual toll of 61. The number of violent incidents involving humanitarian workers more than doubled in the same period, with the most attacks occurring in the Sudan and Somalia. It is the national staff of humanitarian organizations that face the greatest risks. Members of the media, acting as the world's witnesses to atrocities and humanitarian needs, alerting all of us to our responsibilities, have also been increasingly subject to attack. In Iraq alone, 26 journalists have been killed this year.

Attacks on humanitarian personnel have a terrible impact on our ability to sustain humanitarian operations. I urge the Security Council to address more systematically the deliberate targeting of our humanitarian and associated staff. These acts must be unanimously condemned by the Council and the perpetrators held to account.

My second long-term concern is protection and assistance for internally displaced persons. Large-scale internal displacement continues to be one of the principal characteristics of conflict. While the global refugee population has dropped by 20 per cent over the past three years, the number of internally displaced persons declined only by a modest six percent in 2005, despite resolution of long-standing conflicts and significant return movements. And we have seen the numbers increase again over the past several months, with waves of new displacement in many countries.

Since 2004, I have repeatedly briefed the Security Council on my missions to Darfur, where direct targeting of civilians has led to repeated cycles of displacement. People have now been displaced multiple times as the victims of shifting conflict and restrictions on humanitarian access. Just last October, fighting in Sri Lanka led to 1,000 families being displaced for the fourth time from the northern part of the Batticalca district when humanitarian access was suspended.

States bear the direct responsibility for the protection of all civilians, including internally displaced persons, and must be held to their obligations. In at least 12 countries, six million internally displaced people receive no assistance or protection from their Governments. The humanitarian community has squarely taken on the long-standing challenge of internal displacement through our humanitarian reform agenda.

We now have more predictable operational leadership for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons, established through the so-called cluster process or through humanitarian partnerships of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund is also a significant advance and makes headway towards ensuring a predictable and effective response to acute protection needs. While those developments will go some way towards improving protection and assistance on the ground, they cannot replace the responsibility of States.

The third concern is sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence are not simply an unfortunate consequence of conflict; increasingly, they are a deliberate and devastating weapon against individuals as well as targeted communities. Despite recent ground-breaking International Criminal Court indictments for the use of rape as a war crime, sexual violence continues unchecked and unchallenged.

I am outraged at our almost complete inability to address this scourge. And I am deeply disturbed that we have not taken more decisive action to prevent it, as

well as respond to it, through our political and humanitarian means. In Darfur, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported an explosive increase in sexual assaults this summer. Over a five-week period, more than 200 women were attacked around Kalma camp alone. Senior Government officials in the Sudan continue to deny that such acts occur, and they have yet to take any serious action. While this persists, those who rape will continue to enjoy more freedom of movement than those living in the camps.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 25,000 cases of rape were reported last year, with thousands more occurring this year and countless others unknown. Targeted violence on that scale requires much more effective and concerted action by the Security Council. Resolution 1325 (2000) gave us clear standards for the specific protection of women in conflict, but we must now require stronger reporting, full compliance and legal recourse.

In Goma, there have been 10 prosecutions for sexual violence. That has already had some effect. Women victims, no longer branded as deviants, are now seen as survivors of an atrocious crime. With the stigma broken, more women are seeking assistance. When I met presidential candidate Kabila earlier this year, I asked that military, political and administrative leaders be tried and held accountable for rape committed on their watch. Mr. Kabila then agreed to do so if elected. We now need him and other leaders of conflict-ridden countries to live up to their responsibilities.

I ask the Council to consider the pervasive nature of sexual violence when reviewing peacekeeping mandates as well, to ensure that force composition includes dedicated female policing units and that adequate support is provided for response and prosecution where required.

Over the past three years, we have seen, at long last, modest progress being made on the issue of children associated with fighting forces. The numbers have declined some 20 per cent, with an estimated 250,000 children still being exploited as soldiers, cooks and spies and for sexual purposes. Progress has been due mainly to the large-scale demobilization of children in West Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, even though we continue to see active recruitment in many countries. Long-term support for reintegration is critical in order to protect children from recruitment or re-recruitment.

After my most recent mission to Uganda, I remain very concerned about the conditions of children held by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). I welcome the recent presidential statement from the Council (S/PRST/2006/45) calling upon the LRA to immediately release all children, women and non-combatants. The situation in Sri Lanka is also particularly disturbing, with repeated reports of continuing recruitment. I hope that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam will honour its commitment to release all children from its ranks by 1 January.

I would now like to turn to a number of trends and reflect on how we can improve the protection of civilians under three distinct categories: countries emerging from conflict, those where conflict is deeply entrenched and those where the effect of conflict and violence against civilians must be addressed before it takes root.

In countries emerging from conflict, such as Angola, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Southern Sudan, protection concerns remain, even though emergency relief may no longer be our most pressing priority. In such situations, the Council must recognize that protection needs relate more specifically to issues of reconciliation, transitional justice and land or property rights. The inequalities and perceived injustices that stem from violations of human rights, if left to fester, will challenge sustainable peace and security.

Missions need to be properly resourced in their final phases, and protection-of-civilians indicators need to be used to better define those resources. Otherwise, where mandates are short-sighted and the foundations of stable recovery are deeply flawed, we will find ourselves repeatedly returning to unfinished work, as we have now done for the fifth time in Haiti.

My second category includes those many countries that face widespread and chronic protection crises resulting from repeated cycles of violence. We must now recognize that the conflict related to the Middle East crisis has become so deeply entrenched that it has created one of the world's most serious protection crises. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are at least 1.2 million refugees from Iraq living in neighbouring countries, with unconfirmed figures

indicating that 40,000 to 60,000 people a month are crossing into Syria seeking refuge, with totally inadequate support. The worst aspects of the protection crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories are reflected in the deaths of more than 110 children under the age of 17 this year — more than twice the number of deaths in 2005.

The complex nature of those conflicts and the use of terror seriously challenge our capability to ensure the protection of civilians. But that should not deter members from challenging the disproportionate use of force, attacks against protected civilian installations and restrictions on humanitarian access and operations, whenever they occur.

During my tenure as Emergency Relief Coordinator, I have repeatedly come before the Council to highlight the neglected protection concerns in Somalia. More than 400,000 Somalis live in deplorable conditions after having endured multiple displacements, years of drought and, now, massive flooding. The rising tension between the Islamic Courts and neighbouring forces may lead to even more catastrophic conflict. With improvements in security in some parts of the country, I am concerned that the United Nations policy of non-engagement with the Islamic Courts will bind the hands and feet of the humanitarian agencies, preventing us from meeting our humanitarian mandate to provide assistance to those most in need, wherever they are.

In Darfur, I deeply regret that, despite one of the largest humanitarian operations in the world and massive, sustained advocacy, civilians continue to be subjected to rape, murder and repeated forced displacement. The number of displaced persons has doubled since 2004, and an unprecedented two thirds of the population is now in need of emergency assistance.

In Uganda, systematic advocacy and the concerted attention of the Council have begun to bear fruit, as the current fragile dialogue with the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army have led to the first prolonged cessation of hostilities this decade.

Thirdly, let me just mention the countries that must concern us because they are the ones where we see the re-emergence of concern for the protection of civilians. I have already expressed my concerns about the serious threat to civilian protection in Sri Lanka. Myanmar now has a displaced population of over half a million people to whom humanitarian access is severely restricted, and the situation remains of serious concern. I would like to stress the importance of the continued dialogue with the authorities of Myanmar under the Secretary-General's good-offices mandate. I hope that those discussions will yield tangible results in the near future.

In conclusion, the opportunities to strengthen the protection of civilians lie in the hands of the Council. I urge members to firmly exploit the opportunities and use the tools at their disposal. I will leave the Council with five issues as future priorities.

First, I urge the Council to remain committed to regular thematic briefings and debriefings following the field missions of my successors, briefings by my colleagues, and consultations with non-governmental organizations under the Arria formula. That will equip the Council with the best information available to facilitate its decisions. My Office remains committed to establishing effective monitoring systems to assist the Council. We will be able to provide a systematic analysis of protection trends, and we are establishing a comprehensive information management system for the protection of civilians.

Secondly, the Security Council must make more effective use of the mechanisms at its disposal to prevent violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. Targeted sanctions can be used more effectively to support the creation of a more secure environment for the civilian population by sending a clear message to the perpetrators that such violations are unacceptable.

Thirdly, conflict mediation and the timely and effective use of good offices constitute a critical tool at our disposal, which we must engage at the earliest opportunity. International protection, whether by peacekeepers or humanitarians, can be only an interim response. Civilians will continue to suffer until protection is complemented by conflict prevention, conflict resolution and political solutions. It is important to ensure that humanitarian negotiation and mediation skills continue to be actively deployed even in the seemingly most intransigent environments. I welcome the efforts that have been taken to strengthen the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs, as well as the introduction of the Peacemaker Initiative. Our close cooperation with that Initiative will be key to

ensuring that protection concerns are adequately reflected in peace processes and mediation initiatives.

Fourthly, there is a need for comprehensive, predictable funding. The establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund is a significant advance, and will help us to make headway towards ensuring a predictable humanitarian response to acute protection crises. However, the impact of more predictable humanitarian funding will be limited if there is insufficient funding for peace mediation, peacebuilding or peacekeeping operations to address their mandated protection responsibilities. I urge the Council to ensure that appropriate and adequate resources are available to peacekeeping missions that enable missions to discharge their responsibilities for the protection of civilians in all phases of a mission's mandate.

My final concern is to ensure that sufficient guidance and support are provided for peacekeeping operations. My Office is working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to develop preliminary guidance, and efforts are also under way to work with regional organizations to better define their role in the protection of civilians. It is important to expand our notions of the protection role that peacekeeping operations can play, not only through the provision of physical protection, but through supporting civil order, the restoration of judicial systems and the strengthening of the rule of law. We must also ensure, along with our colleagues in peacekeeping and political affairs, that we are able to develop and draw on the skills of regional organizations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Council for their attention to these issues of grave and mutual concern today and throughout the duration of my tenure as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. In times of difficulty for humanitarian access overall, my access to the Council has always been impeccable. Together, we can make a continued positive difference. We cannot afford to fail.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Egeland for his very important briefing. Once again, I wish him every success for the future.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members in prior consultations, I remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts of their statements in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like at the outset to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing. I would also like to thank him for the efforts that he has made over the past three years in the area of humanitarian assistance. We wish him every success. I also wish to commend United Nations agencies for their significant efforts in the field of protecting civilians in armed conflict over the years.

The issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict is an old one. International humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and its two Additional Protocols of 1977, sets out adequate provisions in this regard. While the provisions of international humanitarian law have been widely accepted, many challenges remain in their implementation. We are deeply concerned about the fact that the lives and property of civilians are threatened in armed conflict. We urge the relevant parties to armed conflicts to abide by international humanitarian law, provide adequate protection to civilians and avoid threatening their lives and damaging their property.

The important Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), adopted in April, which sets out comprehensive provisions pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and a number of other relevant resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council on previous occasions, have established a legal framework for the work of the Council on this issue. What is needed now is the effective implementation of those documents in order to improve the situation on the ground. In that context, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, the responsibility to protect civilians lies primarily with the Governments of the countries concerned. While the international community and other external parties can provide support and assistance and urge the parties concerned seriously to implement the provisions of humanitarian law and to avoid harming civilians, they should not infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial

integrity of the countries concerned, nor should they enforce intervention by circumventing the Governments of such countries.

Secondly, it is imperative clearly to differentiate between the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The efforts made by humanitarian agencies in the spirit of humanitarianism to provide assistance to civilians affected by armed conflict, often under dangerous circumstances, should be appreciated and commended. However, they should also at all times abide by the principles of impartiality, neutrality, objectivity and independence, in order to maintain the humanitarian nature of their operation and to avoid getting involved in local political disputes or negatively affecting a peace process.

Thirdly, to protect civilians, greater emphasis should be placed on prevention as well as on the need to address both the symptoms and the root causes of a conflict. If the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of world peace and security, can effectively prevent and resolve various conflicts, that would successfully provide the best protection possible to civilians. A number of incidents that occurred this year have demonstrated that failure effectively to respond to the outbreak of conflict will render any ex-post-facto protective measures, however ingenious, virtually ineffectual vis-à-vis the sudden onslaught of violence and conflict. The best way to protect civilians is to provide them with safe and predictable living environments by actively exploring ways of preventing conflicts and effectively resolving ongoing conflicts.

In discussing the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Security Council should continue to approach with caution the concept of the responsibility to protect. The World Summit Outcome last year gave an extensive and very cautious representation of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and went on to request the General Assembly to continue to explore this concept. As many Member States have expressed their concern and misgivings in that regard, we believe that it is not appropriate to expand, wilfully interpret or even abuse this concept. Resolution 1674 (2006) only reaffirmed in principle the relevant statement as contained in the Summit Outcome, without any further elaboration. All sides should continue to abide by the relevant agreed elements of the Summit Outcome in interpreting or applying this concept. In that context, the Security Council cannot and should not take over the role of the General Assembly or make any prejudgment.

Finally, we hope that in the process of implementing the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, full consideration will be taken of the specific characteristics and circumstances of each conflict, so as to adopt appropriate measures aimed at effectively achieving the objective of protecting civilians.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): We wish at the outset to thank Mr. Egeland for his report.

In April this year, the Council adopted a resolution recognizing the threats faced by civilians in armed conflict and condemning all acts of violence and human rights abuses committed against unarmed and vulnerable populations. Many of the peacekeeping operations mandated by the Council have as part of their mandate the protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence.

Unfortunately, the world continues to be plagued by violent conflicts, and civilians often bear the brunt of such crises. Civilians are now the major category of casualties in conflicts worldwide. Violence against civilians in armed conflict includes rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture, execution, forced conscription — sometimes of children — forced labour, and displacement. The primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with the parties to a conflict. In such situations of violent conflict, we must do everything appropriate to protect innocent civilians from the impact of armed conflict. In situations where a State is unable or unwilling to protect its civilians, the international community has a distinct role.

We must also continue to focus our efforts on the prevention of conflict itself. To help prevent conflict, we must focus on the critical signs that an unrepresentative and corrupt Government is in place. These include demonstrated disregard for the rule of law, human rights and basic democratic values such as freedom, equality, transparency and free and fair elections. When these conditions exist, political unrest may be festering. We all are aware of countries exhibiting those traits. What we as a Council choose to do about such situations in their earliest stages can make the difference between life and death for countless innocent civilians.

Let me now turn to some specific cases of concern. We continue to be gravely concerned about the ongoing crisis in Darfur and especially the impact of the conflict on civilians in that region. Civilians continue to be directly targeted, more than 2 million remain displaced from their homes, and most have been victims of severe abuses, including sexual violence.

Mr. Egeland's recent briefing to the Council following his mission to the Sudan painted a stark picture of a humanitarian and human rights situation that has not improved and could be on the brink of even larger-scale catastrophe.

In addition, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers have increasingly been facing harassment and intimidation in the Sudan. This continuing insecurity has had a direct and detrimental impact on the international community's ability to deliver assistance and to provide basic services for the victims of the conflict. The situation in Darfur illustrates clearly a situation in which the international community has a role to play in safeguarding civilians in armed conflict, including those who are internally displaced, since traditional means of protection have broken down.

It is also important to reiterate that internally displaced civilians living in camps are not always protected from serious human rights violations. Several other countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, face delicate situations of transition with protection challenges. United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, together with support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), help ensure that civilians in those regions are not denied the dividends of peace.

We are encouraged by the fact that the Security Council has been more consistent in addressing the regional dimensions of civilian protection. Resolution 1674 (2006) and recent mandates have highlighted key issues that affect civilians in armed conflict, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, forced displacement, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of international law, the need for access by humanitarian personnel to civilians in need of assistance, and the need to promote the safety of United Nations and associated humanitarian personnel.

As we once again reaffirm our commitment to strengthening and reinforcing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, let us ensure that our words and intentions translate into action.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his briefing. As he takes leave of the United Nations, we wish to thank him for his strong and sustained advocacy during his incumbency. We wish him well.

May I also commend you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the issue of the protection of civilians in situations of conflict, which the Secretary-General once rightly described as a humanitarian imperative. This issue is of cardinal importance to the United Nations as a whole, if it is to discharge successfully its Charter obligations of maintaining world peace while promoting sustainable development and strengthening human rights.

Although General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 1991 entrusted Governments and States with the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, parties embroiled in armed conflict are invariably unable to discharge their obligations owing to various inhibiting factors. It is for that reason that the international community, and especially the United Nations, has over the years been at the forefront of this critical humanitarian duty. Indeed, the pivotal role of the United Nations was recognized by world leaders in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome document, and subsequently reaffirmed by resolution 1674 (2006).

We must acknowledge that our Organization, and indeed the Security Council, have, since being seized of the matter, made laudable strides to rein in acts of impunity against unarmed civilians, as demonstrated by the establishment of domestic and international bodies and judicial entities to specifically address the menace. While applauding those measures, we cannot but also stress that recent events in some conflict areas, such as Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are indicative of pertinent gaps that need to be examined, with a view to adopting necessary remedial measures. That requires the total commitment of States to the Secretary-General's call for a culture of protection, through scrupulous adherence to the provisions of all multilateral agreements dealing with the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The changing nature of warfare, be it intra- or inter-State conflict, has of course widened the scope of protection, although its basic elements of physical protection and humanitarian assistance, which are mutually reinforcing, remain unchanged. It has been recognized, that in the new warfare that has emerged, the impact of armed conflict on civilians goes beyond the notion of collateral damage. The physical protection of unarmed civilians in conflict is paramount if an already traumatized populace, especially the vulnerable, like women and children, are to be spared from further agonies of rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced conscription, abduction, forced labour, maiming and forced displacement.

In that connection, the rapid deployment of United Nations peacekeepers in conflict areas is imperative. We recognize that any deployment should be in conformity with the Charter. That notwithstanding, the Security Council has a moral duty to act in dire situations to save civilians not only from genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and other grave violations of human rights abuses in line with the commitment made by our leaders last year. It is also our view that the same sentiments underpin article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. We should stop paying lip service to the concept of the responsibility to protect, and have the political will to stand by the courage of our convictions.

Apart from bringing succour and hope to a traumatized population, the presence of peacekeepers also facilitates the provision of humanitarian assistance to hitherto inaccessible areas, especially remote villages and towns. However, without the requisite mandate, the presence of Blue Helmets may not attain the envisaged objective. That is why we welcome the Security Council's resolve to provide peacekeepers with a robust mandate to enable them effectively to discharge their responsibilities. Furthermore, we support extending the role of peacekeepers, where appropriate, to include the protection of civilians and other humanitarian assistance, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The United Nations system, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, has acquitted itself creditably over the years in providing deprived persons with the basic necessities of life, including food, water, shelter and medical care. Their commendable efforts, often under severe circumstances, have saved hundreds of thousands of lives and led to the improvement in the living conditions of civilians afflicted by the ravages of conflict. Undoubtedly, those noble efforts are often obstructed deliberately by parties to conflicts, whose callous acts often disregard the plight inflicted on innocent civilians by their wanton disruption of their peaceful lives. Parties to conflicts, including armed groups, are obliged to guarantee unfettered access to civilian victims of conflict to cater to their basic needs.

It therefore behoves the community of nations, and especially the Security Council, to ensure that those obligations are fully respected by applying realistic and punitive sanctions against identified persons violating the tenets of these instruments, especially the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their protocols, whose universalization is of the utmost importance. We therefore urge States that are not yet parties to take urgent measures towards that end.

The role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and other United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian activities can only be sustained through the availability of appropriate resources. We therefore urge donor countries and agencies to concretize their commitment through the provision of adequate funding.

The valuable contribution of regional organizations and other inter-governmental institutions in the protection of civilians cannot be overemphasized, given their profound experience and knowledge of the dynamics of a given region. We therefore encourage the further strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to enhance the provision of humanitarian assistance as appropriate.

Our goal of providing protection to civilian victims in conflict would be bolstered by the arrest and trial of perpetrators of acts of impunity and gross human rights abuses. We are therefore encouraged by some actions recently taken by the International Criminal Court in that direction. We hope that the force of example will serve as a deterrent to unscrupulous adventurists from indulging in such heinous crimes.

While saluting all the men and women engaged in humanitarian activities, we hold the view that the most effective means of protecting civilians is by preventing the eruption of conflicts, as peace and stability are sine

qua non conditions for the pursuit of development and the promotion of human rights.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): First, I would like to join my colleagues in expressing the gratitude of my delegation to Mr. Jan Egeland, for his valuable briefing. I would also like to commend his role and active engagement in promoting and defending the rights and freedoms of civilians in armed conflict throughout his tenure as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

We also thank the Qatari presidency for organizing this important debate as part of the continuing efforts of the international community and the Council to strengthen the protection of civilians — especially the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children — which our leaders pledged to undertake at the 2005 United Nations World Summit, thereby realizing in practice the principle of the responsibility to protect.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore limit my statement to a few brief comments.

The existing legal provisions regulating the protection of civilians in armed conflict provide a comprehensive framework. However, they must be fully implemented in practice in order to ensure full respect for civilian status and the protection of all civilians. All parties to a conflict, whether State or non-State actors, must fully and strictly comply with the obligations applicable to them under international law, as well as all the relevant documents and resolutions of the Security Council.

In that regard, it is alarming that many countries involved in present-day armed conflict are not parties to Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions. We therefore repeat our appeal and call upon all States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying the instruments pertaining to international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. Serious gaps also remain in the practical implementation of legal instruments. There is a need for further enhancement in domestic legal systems of the legal framework concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Despite the international community's growing commitment to better address the tragic plight of civilians trapped in situations of armed conflict — including though the adoption of resolution 1674 (2006), which reaffirmed the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity — we have witnessed the ongoing killing of civilians, sexual violence and attacks motivated by ethnic or religious hatred or political confrontation. Unfortunately, as we heard from Mr. Egeland's briefing, the most vulnerable groups, such as children and women, are not excluded. We are still witnessing the killing and maiming of children, rape and other acts of sexual exploitation — which are often used as a weapon of war — abduction, denial of humanitarian access and the use of child soldiers in many conflict situations.

The continually deteriorating situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan — where at least 200,000 people are estimated to have been killed as a result of the conflict between Government forces, allied militias and rebels seeking greater autonomy, and which has experienced an unprecedented forced displacement of about 2 million people, widespread sexual violence and total disrespect for human rights since 2003 — continues to be a cause of our deepest concern. Furthermore, the violence is increasingly spilling over from Darfur into neighbouring regions of the Central African Republic and Chad.

Unfortunately, since the Council's most recent deliberations on that topic in June, the international community has also been saddened by the number of civilian lives claimed by the renewed conflict in southern Lebanon and northern Israel, during which the civilian population, including women and children, faced deliberate missile attacks against towns, and women and children were often used as human shields by militias. The population on both sides continues to be endangered by unexploded ammunition and threatened by rocket attacks.

We are concerned by Mr. Egeland's observation that the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian personnel, in their efforts to provide assistance to the civilian population, as well as journalists daily providing the international community with valuable information from conflict regions, also continue to be subject to deliberate attacks and abductions. In that regard, we appeal to all parties to conflicts to respect the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, the 1949 Geneva Conventions

and the Additional Protocols of 1977, including the Additional Protocol I concerning the protection of journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict.

We would like to underline that impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity is unacceptable and that national judicial authorities have the primary responsibility to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice. In situations where the national judicial authorities are not fully capable of addressing the violation of international humanitarian law, Slovakia fully supports the engagement of the international and mixed tribunals, including the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, let me draw attention to the need for the integration of basic legal and gender training into the training of all armed forces, including peacekeepers, which has been proved to have a clear positive effect on the behaviour, actual conduct of duty, and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights of the troops deployed in conflict situations. That need should be properly addressed in the implementation of any security sector reform plan, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Efforts to prevent deliberate attacks against civilians, sexual violence and the use of child soldiers require the mainstreaming of those issues into security sector and other governance reforms, with the active participation of all stakeholders — Governments, regional and subregional organizations, donors and civil society. In that respect, I would also like to inform the Council that, on Friday, Slovakia, in cooperation with Canada, is organizing the second round table on security sector reform, which will provide us with another opportunity to address that issue in further detail, including the situation of civilians in armed conflict.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his presentation. Seven years after the Council resolved to address the issue of protecting civilians in armed conflict, he is still reporting on that distressing reality.

Like my colleagues who have already spoken, I pay special tribute to Mr. Egeland, who has spoken to the Security Council today for the last time in his capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. Thanks to his work and tenacity, the Council today has a better understanding of the tragic situations in his field of responsibility. His role in raising the international community's awareness of the very serious humanitarian crisis in Darfur has been critical, and we thank him for it.

At this time last year, we found that the resolutions adopted by our Council in 1999 and 2000 did not go far enough and that their implementation left much to be desired. In March, at the initiative of the United Kingdom, the Council adopted the new and ambitious resolution 1674 (2006), whose full implementation we must now ensure. The resolution must be taken into account in the Council's activities, including in the definition and implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping operations. The Council's credibility is at stake therein.

I must stress that the responsibility to protect civilian populations falls first and foremost to the Governments concerned. Wherever populations are threatened, Governments must fully assume their responsibilities to protect them. The international community must ensure above all that they do not shirk those responsibilities. Regional organizations and the United Nations must encourage them and, if necessary, assume their own responsibilities. In a number of situations, such as in Darfur, the United Nations and regional organizations must work closely with one another.

The issue of access to threatened populations is key to protection. It is unacceptable that 10 million people should be deprived of that access. It is also our responsibility to promote access of humanitarian assistance to those populations, and we must therefore be especially attentive to the protection of United Nations humanitarian workers and those affiliated with non-governmental organizations, as provided for in our resolution 1502 (2003). We must also see to the protection of thousands of humanitarian workers.

My country notes that systematic violations of humanitarian law, and particularly indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations and the humanitarian actors seeking to protect them, are becoming increasingly common. Humanitarian space is no longer the sanctuary it should be, and that distresses us.

We also share the Under-Secretary-General's concern with regard to the specific situation of journalists in armed conflict, and we thank him for drawing the Council's attention to that issue. Without

journalists in the field, we will often be ignorant of events. Without information, we cannot protect civilian populations in a timely manner. In 2005, 65 journalists were killed throughout the world; 75 media professionals have already been killed in 2006. Those figures are the highest in 10 years, and we cannot fail to react to them. We feel that the Council must send a very clear message to all parties to conflicts, reminding them of their obligations to prevent any violence against journalists, and of potential investigations and sanctions in their failure to do so. International humanitarian law that protects journalists must be respected. It is in that spirit that Greece and France, together with the United Kingdom, Denmark and Slovakia, plan to submit proposals to the Council. The message of the Council on this subject is expected, and we hope that it will be possible to arrive at a consensus very quickly.

The last point that I wanted to raise was the protection of the most vulnerable parts of the civilian population — women and small girls victims of sexual violence. Children are already a particular issue of attention for the Security Council. When it comes to children, my delegation has invested itself particularly in being vigilant in these matters. As president of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts, I have learned a lot from the fertile debates in the Council and the Assembly on this subject. The remarkable work that is being done on the ground by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, by UNICEF and by child protection offices within various non-governmental organizations permits us to hope that progress can be made.

Women, girls and boys are very often victims of internal displacement in and external displacement from the States from which they come. Millions of displaced persons are being provided with a very low level of protection on the ground, if any at all, though now there are more of them than there are of refugees. We need to seriously think about how we can meet their needs, while respecting the Charter. We also wish to reiterate our attachment to the rights of these people and their return to their homes in security and dignity.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for his statement and to align myself with the statement to be made later by the Ambassador of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The briefing we have just heard demonstrates that the protection of civilians remains a current and compelling concern. All parties to armed conflict must strive to prevent harm to civilians. Parties must comply fully with the requirements of international law on the protection of civilians, especially concerning the bans on physical attack, sexual and gender-based violence, the use of child soldiers and forced displacement. They must ensure that specific measures for the protection of civilians are included in peace agreements. New peacekeeping missions should be given the mandates and the resources they need in order to protect civilians, and peacekeepers must be trained to understand the issues involved.

I have just spoken of a lot of imperatives — a lot of "musts", and rightly so, because it reflects those things which we have no choice but to do.

Like the Under-Secretary-General, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned about the high number of internally displaced persons. A stronger framework is needed to ensure that international humanitarian responses meet their needs. Human suffering does not recognize national boundaries.

We commend those United Nations agencies, peacekeeping troops and non-governmental organizations that provide vital humanitarian assistance, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances. We condemn attacks that target them, in the strongest terms. Jan Egeland raised some important points today about the safety and security of such personnel.

I believe there would be advantage in a briefing to the Council on these very issues by the Department of Safety and Security, because impunity cannot be tolerated — not for attacks on humanitarian and United Nations workers, not for attacks on journalists, and not for attacks on civilians. Such acts should be properly investigated and guilty parties must be held accountable. Where States are unable or unwilling to do this, the international community should be prepared to take action. We welcome the developments that have taken place in 2006, with the arrests of individuals accused of terrible crimes, such as Charles Taylor and Thomas Lubanga.

When disasters happen, the world looks to the United Nations and to Jan Egeland to lead the international response. If this response is to continue to be effective, however, the United Nations must

continue to identify and embrace new ways of meeting humanitarian challenges. The United Kingdom commends the groundbreaking work of the Under-Secretary-General in this respect. The Central Emergency Response Fund is an example of a new initiative that has successfully provided an easier way for quickly getting the right aid to the right places in a crisis situation, and doing so immediately. We should build on successful initiatives like this to ensure that we are able to continue to meet the humanitarian needs of the vulnerable in times of crisis.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about the impact of armed conflicts on civilians around the world. Over the past year specifically, there have been increased military campaigns against the insurgents in eastern Burma. Civilians, including children, in the conflict areas suffer from the repercussions of these campaigns. We call on the Government of Myanmar — Burma — and other actors to work towards a peaceful resolution to these conflicts. We also call on that Government to cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross and United Nations agencies on this issue.

In the Middle East, the conflict in Gaza has caused unacceptable suffering to civilians. We welcome the recent ceasefire agreement and call on both sides to do all they can to preserve the ceasefire and to extend it to the West Bank.

The United Kingdom recognizes the threat posed to vulnerable civilians by the uncontrolled spread and accumulation of small arms and light weapons. A poorly regulated arms trade allows weapons to flow into the hands of those involved in conflict or human rights abuses. We are committed to taking forward on a legally binding basis, a treaty on the trade in all conventional arms.

I would like to conclude on a more personal note by thanking Jan Egeland for his tireless efforts over the past three years, which I know have involved personal sacrifices to him and his family. He has been an innovative leader of the reform agenda and has frankly served as the moral conscience of this Council and of the United Nations on many occasions. Humanitarian briefings are now a regular feature of our work in the Council. To that, we owe a great deal — a debt — to Jan, and he has our best wishes for the future. Because of the priorities he has set out today, they, as well of the rest of his work, should help guide our ongoing discussions and work on these crucial issues in the future.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I would like to thank Sir, for convening this very important meeting. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Egeland, for his informative briefing. I would like to take this opportunity to express to him our sincere appreciation for his dedication and hard work in addressing all kinds of issues, particularly the suffering of civilians caught in situations of armed conflict.

Greece aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Only some months ago the Security Council adopted its latest resolution, 1647 (2006), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, demonstrating its determination to enhance and improve its response to the protection needs of civilians in armed conflict. The resolution also reaffirms the pledge of the world leaders during the World Summit in September last year to protect their own citizens and the citizens of other States if the latter manifestly fail to do so. Today, given the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in many conflict situations, the resolution remains as timely as ever. We believe that this meeting offers a good opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to its full implementation.

In his earlier presentation, Mr. Egeland painted a disturbing picture of protection crises around the world where violence has become deeply entrenched despite the many efforts made by the international community to ensure sustained and coordinated international attention during the post-peacekeeping phase.

We are gravely concerned about that development. Deliberate violent attacks against civilians, unchallenged sexual violence against women and girls, recruitment, trafficking and other forms of exploitation of children, new waves of displacement and violence, abuse of displaced persons and refugees and blatant attacks against humanitarian staff cannot be tolerated and must come to a halt.

To that one should also add the deliberate attacks against journalists and media staff in situations of armed conflict. The number of casualties among that category of civilians has increased considerably during the past years. Such attacks aim at interfering with the free flow and dissemination of information, which is

crucial for the protection of civilians and an important component in every democratic society.

Journalists are entitled to the protection afforded to them by the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. States and non-State actors should respect that law. For that reason we welcome Mr. Egeland's reference to the safety and security of journalists. With that mind, my country, along with France, Denmark, Slovakia and the United Kingdom, will submit to the Security Council a concrete proposal regarding the protection of journalists in armed conflict.

Preventing protection crises from becoming entrenched is an important element of civilian protection. Prompt and early action is required to prevent such crises. Systematic reporting to the Security Council is important to facilitate and strengthen decision-making and effective response. In that respect we encourage briefings, not only those by the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Egeland, but also by the High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding her on-the-ground monitoring of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Respect for the principles of the rule of law and international humanitarian law and fighting impunity are essential for civilian protection. States and non-State actors have the obligation to respect international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, and perpetrators should be brought to justice. In that respect, the role of the International Criminal Court and its impact on those committing such atrocities could be crucial, and the international community and the States concerned should fully cooperate with the Court and support its difficult task. National judicial institutions should also be in a position to tackle impunity, and local justice systems should be supported. The Security Council should continue to give attention to rule of law issues, which should be incorporated in the mandates of peacekeeping missions.

The protection of civilians is a complex and difficult issue, given the many challenges involved. However, it is important that today's peacekeeping missions provide protection against violence for civilians trapped in situations of armed conflict. Peacekeeping missions should be in a position to protect innocent civilians and vulnerable populations against physical violence. The creation of secure environments in and around the camps to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and safeguard humanitarian staff should be clearly spelled out in the mandates of the missions. It is also important that the missions ensure that humanitarian principles are upheld.

As Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno said some time ago,

> "however robust United Nations peacekeeping operations military capabilities might be, they alone cannot ensure security in post-conflict environments absent the right political strategy and the political will of the relevant national and international actors." (*S/PV.5225, p. 5*)

We fully agree with his remarks and believe that such political will and leadership are needed to bring a war-torn society together around common agenda and steer the delicate balance between promoting national reconciliation and unity, on the one hand, and accountability for war crimes on the other. Much remains to be done both at the international level and in the field of national institution-building and security sector reform.

If peace and security are to be lasting, many international and national actors have to work together.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing on the progress made and the challenges that remain in the effort to protect civilians in armed conflict. We commend the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), headed by Mr. Egeland, for playing an active lead role in moving the agenda of the protection of civilians forward.

I also pay high tribute to all of the humanitarian agencies and international organizations, as well as representatives of non-governmental organization (NGOs) and civil society, who actively contribute to enhancing cooperation in this area. Thanks to their commitment and dedication, there have been a number of significant developments in the area.

We note and welcome some tangible progress made in the past years in establishing the normative standards and instruments for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, such as the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and of Security Council resolution 1674 (2006). They

represent, among others, significant achievements in the arsenal of basic tools to help the international community deal more effectively with the protection of civilians. We must now pay greater attention to their implementation and to translating them into action and behaviour, so we can better assist people and thus make a difference on the ground in the protection and the delivery of needed services.

As noted, we also welcome the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) as an important addition in the humanitarian arsenal of tools this year. The strengthened CERF can increase the predictability of funding and the ability of the United Nations agencies to carry out their protection mandate, including assisting civilian populations in forgotten crises, more effectively. Resources in the expanded CERF should be allocated and used so as to maximize the protection of civilians in specific situations.

In the Council's last open debate on the issue, at its 5476th meeting in June 2006, my delegation pointed out that a wide range of actors who are actively involved in the protection of civilians needed a clearer understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, or a better defined division of labour among them, in order to be effective. In that regard, the Aide Memoire adopted by the Council in 2002 (S/PRST/2002/6, annex) provided a useful tool to assist the Council in formulating a peacekeeping mandate, as a checklist to properly address protection needs. However, as Under-Secretary-General Egeland noted in his statement to the Council in June — and my delegation agrees with his suggestion — the Aide Memoire needs to be reviewed and updated and put to better use.

Related to that, my delegation also suggested that some kind of a model matrix be developed to better define the respective roles and responsibilities of each actor involved in the protection of civilians. Such a matrix could include a time frame in which respective actors would begin and phase out their activities, as the situation allows. I urge Council members to reflect on that and to take appropriate action on the basis of recommendations that we should request the Secretariat to formulate.

That being said, I would like to touch upon three other points noted by Mr. Egeland in his statement and his conclusions which we believe would merit careful consideration by the Council and member States.

First, how much should the Council, as an organ primarily responsible for international peace and security, concern itself with humanitarian-related issues? There has been some debate on that issue, keeping in mind the mandates of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. As a general point, the manner and the extent to which the Security Council has taken up humanitarian-related issues for the past two years is, in the view of my delegation, appropriate, particularly as they relate to the protection of civilians agenda.

We therefore much appreciated receiving briefings provided from time to time by OCHA and by the heads of humanitarian agencies, and in some cases by civil society representatives, on matters of concern to the Council with respect to country-specific situations or thematic issues, such as the humanitarian impact of sanctions measures. On that basis we welcome the open debate today and hope that this practice will be maintained with the same frequency.

In this connection, Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) reaffirms the responsibility to protect populations. In the 2005 Summit Outcome document our leaders expressed preparedness to take collective action through the Council in this matter. Bearing that in mind, the Council needs to further discuss the role it should play in protecting civilians in armed conflict more energetically and in more depth. I have already mentioned as a practical measure the need to update the Aide Memoire and the possibility of developing some kind of model matrix.

Those would be useful first steps, but they are not enough. The Council will need to go further and discuss how it can best ensure conditions necessary for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in general and in specific situations. In Darfur, for example, a serious gap remains between what the Government is able or willing to provide in terms of humanitarian access and safety of humanitarian personnel, and the real needs on the ground. Because of this crying gap, a countless number of people suffer or perish daily and the crisis intensifies despite the best intentions and efforts of the African Union through the deployment of its Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Additional urgent support to AMIS is essential as the least minimum, pending agreement on transition to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

But in the end, as Under-Secretary-General Egeland noted, international protection, whether by peacekeepers or humanitarians, can be only an interim response — a band-aid, to use his term. Efforts to improve the humanitarian situation cannot be separated from efforts on the political front, namely, securing a durable cessation of hostilities, developing fully the political process and engaging in effective peacekeeping activity. And here, the Council's ability and credibility is truly being tested.

Second, in terms of action that Member States will need to take, we agree that the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) needs to be addressed as a matter of high priority. We fully support the recommendation made in the report of the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence, "Delivering as One" (A/61/583), that the humanitarian agencies should clarify their mandates and enhance their cooperation on IDPs. We need to explore this further in various forums, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Executive Committees of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies.

Another issue of high priority related to the protection of civilians is conventional weapons such as small arms and anti-personnel mines. The widespread availability of small arms causes a large number of civilian casualties and gives rise to connected problems such as child soldiers and insecurity in communities. This year, too, Japan, South Africa and Colombia co-sponsored a draft resolution in the General Assembly on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects in order to contribute to raising awareness on the subject. Japan, along with other Member States, will continue to work on this priority through the provision of assistance to affected countries such as Afghanistan. We urge all Member States to ratify the Ottawa Convention.

Likewise, we are concerned about the humanitarian toll that unexploded cluster bombs can cause. Given that there is no legally binding international instrument to ban and regulate their production and use, the international community needs to give urgent attention to this terrible problem.

Third, we stress the importance of strengthening dialogue with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including through Arria-formula meetings. The recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan met with local and international NGO representatives for useful exchanges of views and sharing of information. We welcome the dialogue with NGOs and civil society members at the workshop in Côte d'Ivoire. We encourage OCHA to continue to strengthen interaction with NGOs on the protection of civilians through holding workshops in the field and other possible ways.

I will also mention that Japan welcomes the introduction of a draft resolution by France and other European countries with a focus on the protection of journalists from violence in conflict situations. We look forward to participating actively in the discussion of that proposal, and we hope that the Council can act on it expeditiously.

Lastly, since this is the last time that Under-Secretary-General Egeland briefs the Council before he leaves office, we wish to pay him a high tribute for all his valuable work and many important achievements during his tenure as head of OCHA and Emergency Relief Coordinator. For the past three and a half years, he presided over humanitarian coordination, which I know is no easy job, with great dedication and distinction in a number of crisis situations, including the Indian Ocean tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan, in Darfur, Uganda, and so on. We all agree that in his service to the United Nations he greatly succeeded in raising the profile of the humanitarian cause in the eyes of the international community, for which he should be congratulated. The Government of Japan thanks him for all his efforts, and wishes him well in whatever he will do after he leaves the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There is still a large number of speakers on my list. With the consent of the Council, I shall suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.